

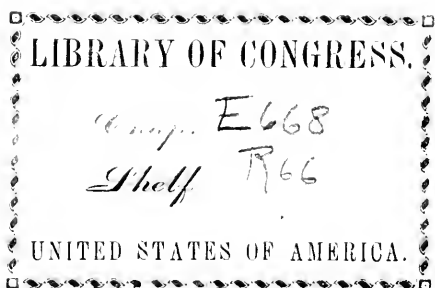


**E**

663

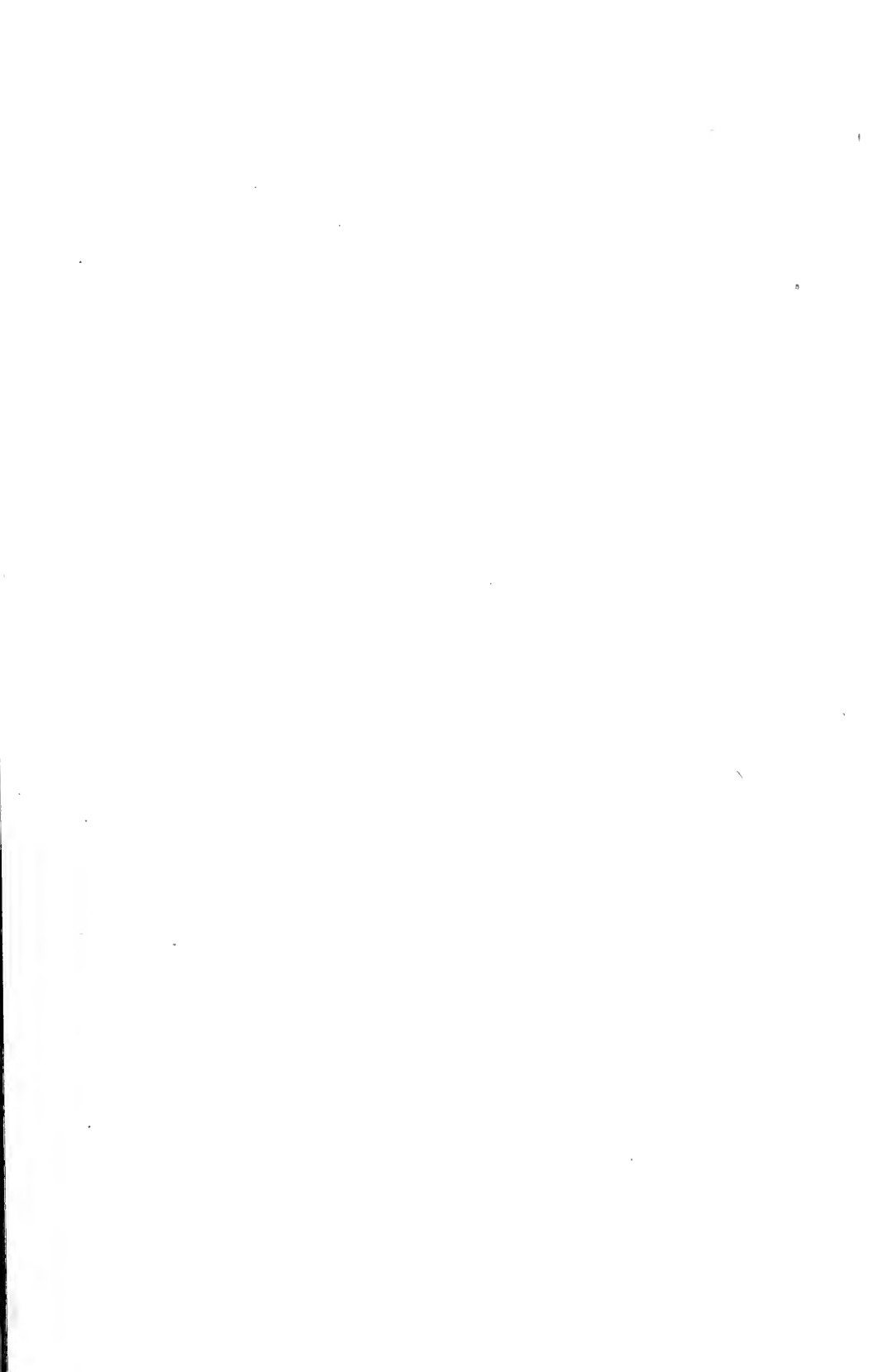
P66













# SPEECH

OF

HON. WILLIAM E. ROBINSON,

OF NEW YORK,

ON

## RECONSTRUCTION;

DELIVERED

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, JULY 12, 1867.

---

"Our theory of government has no place for a State except in the Union." \* \* \* \* \* "To oblige the central authority to govern half the territory of the Union by Federal officers and by the Army is a policy not only uncongenial to our ideas and principles, but preëminently dangerous to the spirit of our Government."—*Rev. Henry Ward Beecher.*

---

1869

WASHINGTON:

PRINTED AT THE CONGRESSIONAL GLOBE OFFICE.

1867.

EGG8

TR66

## RECONSTRUCTION.

---

The House having under consideration the bill supplementary to an act to provide for the more efficient government of the rebel States—

Mr. ROBINSON said:

Mr. SPEAKER: I have desired to say a word or two during these debates on the subject of reconstruction, and now rise, not to make any set speech, but merely to submit a few observations which I deem pertinent to the occasion.

What, sir, has brought us together at this time in extraordinary session of Congress? Has anything been done by the South to provoke it? Has any southern man or southern woman or southern child done or said anything calling for harsher laws than those we have already imposed upon them? No; it is merely because the proper officer of our Government has given a proper opinion on what some call a very improper act of Congress, that the representatives of the people and the representatives of the States have been called away from their pleasant homes to this hot and dusty city in this heated term. You have not even the poor pretext of anything done by our southern brethren for this additional legislation, for they have submitted with unprecedented willingness to every enormity of legislation put upon them.

Sir, a short time ago, during the present Congress, the gentleman from Pennsylvania, [Mr. STEVENS,] the gentleman from Ohio, [Mr. BINGHAM,] the gentleman from Massachusetts, [Mr. BUTLER,] and gentlemen from every State in the Union then represented here voted the sympathy of the American people

with the people of Ireland, suffering under the cruel wrongs and oppressive laws which England had inflicted upon her. That island is not much larger than the first three districts of New York, and has a population not exceeding five or six millions. Every Representative on this floor voted his sympathy with Ireland in her sufferings from British oppression. But here are ten States, with a population more than twice the number of that of Ireland, and ten or twenty times its extent; our own territory, our own people, under our own flag, enduring oppression such as no British Government ever attempted to force upon Ireland. Why, sir, have we not heard that a military governor, under a law which we have now met professedly to make more stringent and more despotic, has removed municipal and State officers without trial and without any given reason? Have we not heard of a military governor, under a law now to be made more severe, who stopped a civic procession till they procured and consented to carry a certain flag, to salute that flag, uncovering three paces before reaching it, bowing their necks as they passed it, and remaining uncovered three paces beyond it? What would have been the consequences if some poor fellow, blinded with dust and bedazzled with its splendor, had made a misstep or a miscalculation of steps, and uncovered only two and a half paces before approaching, and bowed when half a pace beyond, I cannot tell. But this I do know: that during the seven centuries of British misrule in Ireland no military commander ever dared to remove from office without accusation and trial even

an alderman of Cork or Dublin, or any other Irish city; and though the Irish people had cursed the British flag in oratory and song, no military governor or tyrant ever dared to ask them to carry that flag in any of their processions or to uncover or bow their heads while passing it. Oh, sir, it is a sorry spectacle to see the Representatives of a Republican people voting sympathy with the sufferers under the misgovernment and oppression of our neighbors while planning and perpetrating for our own fellow-citizens acts of tyranny and misgovernment such as no monarch, emperor, or tyrant ever yet inflicted upon a subjected people, however rebellious they may have been. If British rule in Ireland were as tyrannical as ours is in these ten suffering States every man, woman, and child in Ireland would be a Fenian. It is with the deepest sorrow I make this assertion. I do it to avert, if possible, the spirit of oppressive legislation, which if practiced in any other country would call forth our sympathy for the sufferers and our condemnation of the oppressor.

Mr. KELLEY. Will the gentleman yield for a moment?

Mr. ROBINSON. I will yield with pleasure.

Mr. KELLEY. I beg leave to say to the gentleman from Ireland [laughter] that no longer ago than yesterday I introduced on this floor a very devoted son of the Emerald Isle, who has been for some years a naturalized citizen of the United States and a resident of the State of North Carolina, who appealed to the various members to whom I introduced him to overthrow by express letter everything in the form of government in the South, save the laws of Congress as administered by the military commanders, and he presented to these gentlemen, as well as to me, the argument that the very life was being crushed out of every loyal man, not by the United States Government, but by the pretended State and local governments of the South. And the gentleman will not, if he travels through the South, find one out of every ten of the Irish American citizens there who does not look to Congress to protect them from oppression greater than they endured in Ireland.

Mr. ROBINSON. In reply to what the

eloquent gentleman from Pennsylvania has said, I need only say that I doubt not there are a thousand Irishmen to-day living under British rule, for whose victims we so recently unanimously voted the sympathy of the American people, who would appeal to the British Parliament if introduced upon its floor to overthrow by express letter everything but British rule in Ireland as administered by her Castle-reaghs and Derbys, and would present that the very life would be crushed out of every loyal man if the Fitzgeralds and Emmets and O'Briens had succeeded in overthrowing that British rule in Ireland, against which we so recently and unanimously protested in this House; and the gentleman from Pennsylvania will not, if he travels through Ireland, find one out of every ten of the loyal men in Ireland who feed and fatten on the patronage of British rule in their starving country who does not look to the British Parliament to protect them and preserve them from the calamity of granting to Ireland her rights and liberties. And it is no argument to me that because some Irishman, who has foresworn allegiance to British power and British law and fled from their oppressions, has here become the apologist of laws more galling and oppressive than those whose authors he foreswore, that I should see others faults and not my own; that I should join in voting condemnation on our neighbors and cover up our own faults, equal, if not far transcending theirs. I care not who such a man is, he is not a true Irishman; but a British—you may fill up the blank as you please.

Mr. KELLEY. I did not say that that gentleman said he had fled from the oppression he speaks of. I apprehend that like the gentleman he came here because America was a freer country than Ireland.

Mr. ROBINSON. I thank the gentleman for that word "was." *It was* a freer country. I was here an old Clay Whig when the Democrats were in power, daily protesting against their attempts to infringe the rights of minorities and trample down the safeguards of our Constitution, but they never dared to trample on the rights of their political opponents; they never dared to override all constitutional provisions to perpetuate their power, as the party in a majority here are now doing. I was an

old-line Whig then, and I would be a recreant and a coward if I failed to denounce now enormities greater than those I then denounced.

Sir, I have some idea what these loyal southern men are who come here to invoke oppression on their people. I know the power of misrepresentation. I know the efforts made to excite and keep alive a spirit of revenge against the people of the South by persons calling themselves southern loyalists. I know the indignities heaped upon the southern people and the threats made against them if they dared to complain. I know that when the gentleman from Pennsylvania made his speech to the people of Mobile he said they must be quiet for he had the military at his back. This must have been very soothing and calculated to hasten reconstruction when he informed them that it might be necessary to urge home his arguments with the bayonet.

Mr. KELLEY. I thank the gentleman for raising that point, and beg him to yield for a moment just here.

Mr. ROBINSON. Does the gentleman say that he did not say so?

Mr. KELLEY. When the cry "Put him down!" "Pull him down!" was raised, I answered, "Gentlemen, you cannot put down free speech by pulling me down. That is one of the rights the exercise of which the American people established by the late war. You will do nothing toward suppressing it by pulling me down. You should bear in mind that the fifteenth infantry are at my back as a representative of that great principle, and if they cannot maintain it in Mobile the United States Army will." But that did not cause the riot. I proceeded, and the riot did not commence until a prearranged signal of two taps upon a bell, a pause and then one tap was given; then the gentleman's friends commenced shooting at me.

Mr. ROBINSON. I throw back the imputation with scorn upon the gentleman from Pennsylvania that those who commenced the riot were my friends. They were his friends who commenced it, and I presume it could be so proved if a proper committee were appointed to investigate it. I had no friends there, and the gentleman knows it.

[Mr. STEVENS, of Pennsylvania, who had

taken a seat immediately in front of Mr. ROBINSON, said something not heard by the reporter.]

Mr. ROBINSON. I have not time to answer every question put to me, but if the venerable and distinguished gentleman from Pennsylvania has any question to ask me and will state it so that I can hear it, I shall take pleasure in trying to answer him.

Mr. STEVENS, of Pennsylvania. I only said if the balls were going to fly I would rather be out of the way. [Laughter.]

Mr. ROBINSON. I hope he will not move away; I am glad to have the honorable gentleman near me; I rejoice to see him over on the right side. [Laughter.] The gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. KELLEY] calls me the gentleman from Ireland. Sir, I do not claim to represent Ireland, but I am proud to claim, here as in all other places, the honor of being one of her sons; but is he not more an Irishman than I am, unless he has degenerated like his North Carolina Irishman? A great many Irishmen get degenerated, and sometimes they change their names. I rather suspect that if a committee to investigate the matter were appointed, with the gentleman from the Worcester district, Massachusetts, [Mr. BALDWIN,] one of the best ethnologists and antiquarians in the country, and my anatomical friend from Ohio, [Mr. MUNGEX,] and my friend from Pennsylvania, [Mr. SCOFIELD,] who introduced the other day the belligerent letter of Professor Agassiz on the origin of the human races, it would be found that the gentleman from Pennsylvania was called O'Kelley at home. He may say that he has only mended his name by dropping the significant O. When he was mending his name he might have mended his manners without detriment to either. [Laughter.]

Mr. KELLEY. I simply assumed that the gentleman represented Ireland, and therein differed from me in the fact that I sometimes consider and speak upon American topics, while he never alludes to any other than Irish. [Laughter.]

Mr. ROBINSON. The gentleman was the first to introduce the Irish topic.

Mr. KELLEY. On the contrary, I did but respond to the gentleman's suggestion, that

we have inflicted upon the southern people greater wrongs than England has inflicted on the Irish.

Mr. ROBINSON. My reference was to American matters compared with those of other countries.

Now, when interrupted by the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. KELLEY] I was about to say something as to the parties guilty of commencing these mobs and riots—for they have been made the cause of all this swarm of reconstruction bills enacted to subject the South to military despotism on the ground that life and property were not secure in those States. The New York Tribune a few days since had an editorial article on the recent Birmingham anti-Popery riots. It appears that a man had been sent down from London to Birmingham to speak against Popery and Ritualism. I have no doubt he thought, if he did not say, that he had the British army at his back. His speeches probably were not more bitter than those of the gentleman from Pennsylvania were, and shrieked into ears as unwilling as those of the people of Mobile. No doubt the anti-Ritualist speaker said his audiences, whom he was abusing, commenced the row. The editor of the Tribune, however, takes this sensible view of the matter. He says:

"Vituperation, however, is not controversy. Religious enlightenment does not come of hard names and yelling defiance to a crowd of ignorant and excitable laborers. If a preacher will throw mud at his Christian brethren he must expect to get spattered in return. If he darts into a crowd of Irishmen and doubles his fists and dares them to come on, it is the most natural thing in the world that he should come out of the crowd with a black eye and a torn coat."

Now, is it not easy to see that vituperation or throwing mud or yelling defiance to a crowd or threatening to shut their mouths with the fifteenth United States infantry might lead to a riot in Mobile as well as in Birmingham? And is it not quite natural to suppose that the riots in Mobile, New Orleans, and elsewhere were just as chargeable to the speakers themselves as to the crowd who, even at the points of the fifteenth United States infantry bayonets, were compelled to listen? The fable of the poor lamb which was killed by the wolf for riling the water which he was drinking up stream might serve to illustrate many transactions between human lambs and human wolves, who must make

some pretense to throw the blame of the quarrel upon those whom they had determined to worry into it anyhow.

But, sir, New Orleans, Mobile, and Memphis have not been the only places where mobs and riots have occurred, and where human life and property have been in danger. If I rightly remember, the city from which the gentleman from Pennsylvania hails had mobs and riots in which churches were sacked and burned and lives lost.

Mr. FARNSWORTH. I rise to a question of order. I submit that this discussion is altogether wide of the question before the House; and I make the further point of order that gentlemen must take their seats.

Mr. ROBINSON. What is the gentleman's point of order?

Mr. FARNSWORTH. It is that the remarks of the gentleman are very wide of the subject before the House.

The SPEAKER *pro tempore*, (Mr. Cook in the chair.) The Chair overrules the first point of order raised by the gentleman, but sustains the second; gentlemen must take their seats.

Mr. ROBINSON. If I remember correctly there were men in that city of Philadelphia, dressed in the apparel of men, who had the courage to spit in the faces and otherwise insult women, and those women sisters of charity! I know excuses were then made, as they are now made, that the insulted and maltreated were the guilty parties. The weak and insulted parties were belied and vilified. The spirit of revenge was evoked and scenes of carnage and outrage followed, such as have never disgraced any city of the South. But blood once shed, the demon spirit of revenge, born of hell and accursed of God, which has no eyes nor ears nor senses to discriminate between right and wrong, was evoked then, as it is now evoked, and let loose to shriek for more blood and clamor for more vengeance.

Mr. KELLEY. Will the gentleman allow me a moment?

Mr. ROBINSON. I will yield as much of my time as I can afford.

Mr. KELLEY. I will endeavor to procure you compensation for any time I may consume. As the gentleman has made these remarks in connection with a somewhat personal colloquy,

I desire to say that it was my privilege at the time to which he has referred, with a policeman's staff, to meet armed rioters, and to be bespattered with the blood of policemen shot at my side while performing the same humble duty that I did in defense of those churches. I beg leave to say further that the aspersion cast upon me in the *Mobile Times* as a means of fomenting a scene of murder was utterly false. The lie designed to excite the Irish citizens of Mobile against me, that I had abandoned the church of my fathers and burned the temples in which they had worshipped in Philadelphia, was as false as the heart that coined it—that of William D. Mann, late of Michigan, but now assessor of internal revenue at Mobile and owner of the *Times*. I was born into the Presbyterian church, but forgetting all save the rights of man, as the people of Philadelphia, both Catholic and Protestant, will bear witness, I periled my life to defend the churches to which the gentleman alludes, and, as prosecuting attorney, prosecuted those who could be arrested and brought to trial for the crime. I was then what the gentleman was not—a member of the Democratic party.

Mr. ROBINSON. I was going to ask the gentleman as to that. It seems that he has been getting wrong while I have been getting right. He was a Democrat then, and that with some may account for the correct manner in which he acted on that occasion; but I have made no allusion to him as having had anything to do with instigating that riot.

Mr. KELLEY. I then believed as I do now in the rights of humanity for all men, whether Irish or American, whether white or black.

Mr. ROBINSON. I have referred to that simply to show that life and property have been unsafe in northern cities as well as in southern cities, and that it is as unfair to inflict these oppressive laws upon the whole South for the Mobile or New Orleans riots, as it would have been to have appointed a military governor to play the tyrant over the entire people of Pennsylvania because a few people in Philadelphia had engaged in a riot, however fearful.

Take, again, the State of Massachusetts. A seminary of learning under the charge of innocent and defenseless nuns was burned down by a Boston mob. On the lofty walls of that black-

ened monument of Massachusetts' bigotry stood the significant inscription, "The Lord Seeth." Year by year these holy, defenseless, innocent women have appealed and appealed in vain to the State of Massachusetts to pay for their losses. Still "the Lord Seeth" that Massachusetts permitted the outrage, and refused all just compensation.

Mr. WILSON, of Iowa. I rise to a point of order: that the remarks of the gentleman are not relevant to the subject pending.

The SPEAKER. The Chair cannot see the relevancy of the argument to this bill, which is for the reconstruction of various States of the Union known as those lately in rebellion. The gentleman must be aware that his remarks are irrelevant.

Mr. BUTLER. Will the gentleman yield to me a moment?

Mr. ROBINSON. For a question only. I cannot yield for any remarks, as my time is nearly up.

Mr. BUTLER. I do not desire to ask any question.

Mr. ROBINSON. I am sorry the gentleman has run short in his catechism. [Laughter.] I was going to refer to another State, if I am not out of order. I presume I shall be in order if I can move an amendment. Is the bill open to amendment?

The SPEAKER. It is not. The motion to recommit is pending.

Mr. ROBINSON. I want to say, and think I can say it in order, that if every State that has permitted a mob or a riot to take place, or in which life and property are not safe, or in which republican forms of government are wanting, is to be put under military dictatorship, (and these are the reasons given why the southern States are so put under,) then this bill should be so amended as to include Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire, and these States should also be deprived of their representatives in both Houses of Congress, and more particularly New Hampshire, the constitution of which to-day precludes Catholics and other denominations from holding office. If any State of the Union needs reconstruction it is not Maryland, the mother of Liberty in this country, but New Hampshire, the only country in this world—as there is but one

in the next—from which men are excluded on account of religion.

The SPEAKER. When the bill shall be open to amendment, if the gentleman then offers his amendment his remarks would be germane.

Mr. ROBINSON. I submit to the rulings of the Speaker, which are almost always correct.

Mr. O'NEILL. I wish to raise a point of order. The gentleman from New York having traveled through Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire, ought to be permitted to come back to his own State of New York to explain to this House the draft riots in which innocent men were killed——

The SPEAKER. That is not a point of order.

Mr. O'NEILL. In which the colored orphan asylum was burned to the ground by his own Democratic constituents.

The SPEAKER. The gentleman is out of order.

Mr. O'NEILL. Would it not be in order for the gentleman to explain all that?

The SPEAKER. It would not.

Mr. ROBINSON. The gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. O'NEILL] has taken one of my favorite topics which are ruled out of order. I was coming to that riot, in which a brave Irishman and worthy Democrat died in defense of our glorious flag in putting down that mob. I was going to say something about its origin, but we have had no congressional committee as yet appointed to inform us whether New York also wants reconstruction and a military dictator. If Mr. Hoffman had been elected Governor it undoubtedly would. I should like to say more on this point if it is in order.

The SPEAKER. It is not.

Mr. O'NEILL. The gentleman took good care, in his long, rambling speech, not to come down to his own city.

Mr. ROBINSON. I should like, by speaking on that subject, to oblige the gentleman; but the Speaker's decision prevents both of us from further indulgence, and I must decline to yield any further. I must say, however, that while I shall always obey with pleasure the rulings of the Speaker, I cannot see how my remarks are out of order. All these recon-

struction bills have been based upon the New Orleans, Memphis, and other mobs and riots. I cannot see why it is not entirely germane to the subject under discussion to show, as New York, Philadelphia, and Boston have had more serious riots than Mobile, Memphis, or New Orleans, and did not need reconstruction or military governors, that the southern States, where life is quite as safe, and religious liberty much better secured, should not have imposed upon them a despotism so cruel and antagonistic to the spirit of our institutions.

Sir, as to the New Orleans riot, it looked very like a preconceived scheme to influence the fall elections against the Democrats of the North. There is no doubt that the meeting of the defunct convention was an illegal assemblage. Parties had come from Louisiana to this city to see if they could obtain congressional support in their rebellion against the government which they themselves under a Republican member of this House and under President Lincoln had established. It was urged in secret caucus of the Republican members of Congress that they had better not adjourn the Thirty-Ninth Congress then in summer session, for some important matters might come to them from New Orleans. General Sheridan had been applied to by the president of that convention to see whether, if it assembled, he would grant military protection. He replied that he would disperse the mob and the convention together. The president then abandoned all idea of calling the convention and came North. In his absence and the absence of General Sheridan a minority of that convention got together, having somehow made a president *pro tempore* without any authority, in the person of a man whom the convention had formerly refused to elect as its president, and having held public meetings to fire the hearts of the most ignorant classes of society, declaring that every man, woman and child in the interest of the Lincoln-Banks government should be killed, and urging that these ignorant classes thus stimulated to the killing point should come armed in procession to the convention. That convention, thus heralded, thus planned in Washington and New Orleans or in both, with assurances of support from Congress, came together with processions of these

inflamed and ignorant classes, with music, banners, and arms, and all "the pomp and circumstance of war." The first shot fired was by a negro at a municipal officer.

Sir, this was the beginning of the riot. Had the police of New York been so assailed and their arrests so rescued, the streets would have run with blood or the guilty parties in the procession would have been secured. Unfortunately Sheridan, who had declared that he would disperse the convention, was away. The military allowed the illegal mobs in the streets and in convention to prevail over the municipal authorities, and the howl for vengeance and blood swept down truth and reason before it.

Mr. KELLEY. I am sorry to interrupt the gentleman again, but he is wrong in saying that the gentleman to whom he refers testified that he could get support from Congress. The gentleman from New York will find if he examines the record that the gentleman referred to stated that he did not find here the support he had expected.

Mr. ROBINSON. Well, the gentleman did come here. He got encouragement enough to proceed to call that illegal and revolutionary body together. The proceedings of the Republican caucus here showed that parties here were cognizant of the movement. The get-together of that convention had been the most bitter secessionists, voting to take Louisiana out of the Union, making speeches against our flag and our Union, one of them since removed by General Sheridan. The gentleman who stated that a letter signed by three members of Congress was in existence, was not called by the committee, though his attendance was requested by the minority of the committee. The gentleman to whom I refer is, I believe, the so-called Governor of Louisiana, now in this city, Mr. Flanders.

Mr. KELLY. No sir; it was Judge Howell who swore that he did not get the moral support of Congress.

Mr. ROBINSON. At all events the man who said he had seen the letter was not called by the committee, because, I presume, they did not want too much information. That the riot was planned to influence the fall elections of 1866, I have no doubt, and such will be

found the fact if ever a full and impartial investigation can be had.

Sir, the South is not represented here today. Loyal and disloyal are both excluded, though it is admitted there are people now waiting for admission numerous enough, after stooping their necks to the military yoke, to comprise ten States in our Union. The chain is eating into their flesh, the blood is oozing from their pores, while we apparently infuriated into madness by the spirit of revenge, are dancing on their prostrate bodies to the music of reconstruction.

Mr. STEVENS, of Pennsylvania. I suppose the gentleman is referring to Andersonville?

Mr. ROBINSON. No, sir, I am not. Those who shriek for more blood and suffering may unfold the gory record of Andersonville. That record is terrific enough and ever to be condemned. But there may be exhibited a worse spirit than was manifested at Andersonville. That has been claimed by the rebels as a military necessity. But there is a spirit of wrong, a spirit of Satan, a spirit entirely inconsistent with the spirit of the age and of all religion, which without the poor excuse of military or other necessity shouts for vengeance and yells for blood. The present fall elections are approaching: again must the horrors of Andersonville be revamped, revarnished, and rehearsed: committees at enormous expenses wrung from a suffering people be published in huge volumes and scattered broadcast over the land to renew the wearied spirit of carnage and revenge. The poet Moore represents Erin sitting on the banks of the Boyne, her Andersonville, the very mention of whose name always renewed the spirit of hell, which the spirit of Christ had almost conquered:

"When will this end, ye powers of good?  
She weeping asks forever.  
But only hears from out that flood  
The demon answer, 'Never!'"

And never shall we have reconstruction till reconciliation fans its holy spark into a vivifying flame. Never, while men who should be pleading for forgiveness as they hope to be forgiven crawl around the tombstones of the bloody past like another "Old Mortality," with incessant mallet and steeled chisel deepening the records of human frailty which the winds

and rains of Heaven were mercifully providing to obliterate.

"A canting crew,  
So smooth, so godly, yet so devilish, too,  
Who, armed at once with Bibles and with whips,  
Blood on their hands and Scripture on their lips,  
Tyrants by creed and torturers by text,  
Make this life hell in honor of the next."

Let "bygones be bygones" if you ever mean to let us become one people again. If you mean to keep us forever apart, say so and be honest. We have fought the South with their Johnstons and their Stonewall Jacksons, and they, by our superior numbers and resources, are at our feet. The prodigal son, at whom the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. STEVENS] recently sneered, has returned from scenes of dissipation and riotous living. If you mean to take him back, do so, and kill the fatted calf. If you mean to slay the prodigal son and keep the fatted calf kicking up its heels around the barn-yard, say so. Do something; but do not talk reconstruction while you are plotting disunion. If the erring wife has returned, take her to your bosom, or if you cannot do this, cast her from you forever. Do not be reconstructing her into another and different person, for that would not be reconciliation, but bigamy. [Laughter.] If you mean to live with her, banish from beneath your roof, as you would a spirit from hell, every croaking miscreant who would shriek into both your ears the follies and the crimes which you both committed and which led to your separation. If you mean to restore to the weeping Union its former children, oh give her back her darling boy, and not the sickly, fairy child with which you would mock a mother's prayer.

Sir, these are words of truth and soberness. I believe the speediest way to reconstruction is honest reconciliation and mutual forgiveness. I stand not here to justify the South. While she was in rebellion she was my enemy; in submission she becomes again my friend. I would not inflict upon her one single unnecessary humiliation. Of crimes against us she has been guilty, but who can cast the first stone of innocence? I tell you that there were more crimes against life, person, and property perpetrated in Massachusetts since the rebellion was put down than in South Carolina; crimes deeper and more damnable, some even nameless, for which no punishment

was inflicted, not even expulsion from the legislative body of which their perpetrators were members. I tell you that life and person and property have been more unsafe, that crimes against them have been more numerous in one single northern district than in the entire State of North Carolina. Life, liberty, and property to-day are in more jeopardy in Tennessee, which you do not propose to reconstruct or control, than in any other portion of the world.

Let me go back and say to the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. KELLEY] that I never read the article from the *Mobile Times* to which he referred. I do not know, nor is it my business to inquire, whether he is a Catholic or a Presbyterian. I do not profess to be the champion of any religious denomination. I was simply showing that people who burned churches dedicated to the service of the living God, and spat in the faces of defenseless women, should be slow to charge upon other localities a want of safety to person and property.

Mr. KELLEY. I prosecuted the cases and I never heard of such an allegation before. If it were so I think I was in a position to have heard it.

Mr. ROBINSON. If they were not guilty of spitting in women's faces they have enough to account for instead of hunting up others' crimes.

Mr. FARNSWORTH. I rise to a point of order. This bill has nothing to do with the burning of churches or spitting in women's faces.

The SPEAKER. The Chair sustains the point of order. This is a bill supplementary to the reconstruction act, and the burning of churches or spitting into women's faces, as the gentleman from Illinois states, has nothing to do with the subject.

Mr. STEVENS, of Pennsylvania. That being the case I rise to move that the speeches hereafter be confined to five minutes, and shall be confined to the pending subject.

The SPEAKER. The gentleman from New York has the floor and cannot be taken off it for that purpose.

Mr. ELDRIDGE. I object to any further interruptions of the gentleman from New York.

The SPEAKER. He has the floor and has

uttered no disorderly words that would take him off it.

Mr. ROBINSON. Mr. Speaker how many minutes have I left?

The SPEAKER. Twenty minutes.

Mr. ROBINSON. Sir, we have not got at the entire secret of this legislation. Its authors strike at the distinguished Attorney General of the United States through the prostrate South, on which they can further trample, rather than answer his arguments. They want also to show their teeth at the President of the United States. Sir, I have been pained, sitting here from day to day, listening to remarks in reference to the President, which, if it were parliamentary, I would denounce as ribaldry. I have been pained to witness the degeneracy in the debates of Congress since I was here twenty-five years ago in the capacity of a correspondent. As a Clay Whig then I used to denounce the Democratic party daily for lack of dignity and for assumption of power; but, oh, how changed since then? Is it not degeneracy when members on the floor will rise from day to day and in a spirit utterly disgraceful to American citizens—

Mr. PILE. I rise to a question of order. I ask if this course of remark is in order?

The SPEAKER. The Chair must decide that it is not in order for the gentleman to speak of the conduct of his fellow-members as disgraceful. He may say that it is unjust, but to say that it is disgraceful is a personal reflection, which is not considered parliamentary.

Mr. ROBINSON. Of course I yield to the decision of the Speaker. It seems perhaps a little Pickwickian to say that a man's actions are unjust and yet not disgraceful. But, sir, I will say, I trust in order, that I have been pained to hear abuse of the President of the United States. I believe that any one who would try to degrade the President of this great Republic in the eyes of the world is a greater traitor to our institutions than those who starved our prisoners at Andersonville or plotted treason under Jefferson Davis. It would be a greater calamity to have the President, the head of our country, made a hissing and a scorn to the rest of the world than the continuance of all Jefferson Davis's forces in the field for forty years. I have been particularly pained

by the conduct of a committee of this House, which seems to act upon the principle, which was formerly followed in Ireland, of hanging men for being suspected of being suspicious!

Sir, there is one in our list of Presidents who is, and I trust ever will be, supreme in the affections of the American people. Upon his pinnacle of glory he now stands, and there let him stand forever. I say that, with that one exception, and perhaps without exception at all, no one of our Presidents could have stood the searching investigation which Andrew Johnson has successfully endured at the hands of this energetic committee. That investigation has proved that he is the purest man, with perhaps this one exception, who ever occupied the presidential chair. I doubt whether the household of George Washington or of Thomas Jefferson, or of any other save that of his own, could have stood the ordeal. The committee, not seeming contented with examining into everything themselves, have an attendant, for whom we have no name, and for whose services I hope there will be no pay, who hunts up information for them, descending to visit haunts of perjury and crime and the convicts' cells, raking the bottoms of these dens of iniquity to see if anything can be found to be bribed or suborned to testify against the executive head of this nation, that he and the people at whose head he stands may be degraded in the eyes of the world; eavesdropping and keyholing around the back and under entrances of the White House, and kneeling to its scullions to see whether they can find out what the President eats or drinks, or what he does before he goes to bed.

Mr. BROOMALL. I must raise the question of order that the gentleman's remarks are not relevant to the question under discussion.

The SPEAKER. The Chair did not like to check the gentleman from New York, who appears disposed to take a wide range, but he does not see what relevancy the examination of the scullions of the White House has to the military reconstruction bill. Perhaps the gentleman may be able to explain its relevancy.

Mr. ROBINSON. Well, sir, I had understood that the President and the Attorney General were the sole cause of this session.

I cannot understand why all this interruption and these calls to order are now made by a party who in almost every speech delivered, either in the last or the present Congress, made executive action the pretext for these unconstitutional reconstruction bills. If the President's failings are urged as an argument for the severity of these measures, may not his virtues be pleaded against them?

But I shall try to continue my remarks in order. I thought of moving to lay this whole matter on the table. I believe that would be in order, notwithstanding the pendency of the motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER. That motion would be in order.

Mr. ROBINSON. My opinion is, as I said on opening, that this measure is brought in, not because the South has done anything to call for this new legislation, but to oppose the action of the President and his distinguished legal adviser; and I am trying to show that there is nothing in the executive action to justify it. After descending to the most unjustifiable means in search of scandal, to be printed at vast expense and to the disgrace of the nation, after two years of searching and swearing, no man here can stand up and make one single charge against Andrew Johnson, either as citizen or President; and his persecutors, after all their searches, reputable or otherwise, stand mute when challenged, as we now challenge them, to report a single charge against him.

Nor has his patriotic family escaped, for even on this floor we have heard their names dragged in to serve base party purposes. Sir, the charming hospitality of that Mansion, the spotless purity of the character of its inmates, the weeds of woe scarcely removed which told of a gallant son dying in the military service of his country, and a lovely daughter widowed by the same holy service, might have protected that household from the prying propensity of committees and the things that pander to their purposes. Well might I say, sir, that even the household of Washington or Madison or Jackson could not have stood the ordeal through which our present Chief Magistrate has passed.

Sir, the character of Andrew Johnson defies the viper that bites the file. There is, perhaps,

no better example of American character than his. Born in the humble walks of life; reared in lessons of industry, virtue, and religion; self-educated, self-supported, and self-reliant; rising by that American rule of gradation from a town commissioner and mayor of Greenville and trustee of its academy to be member successively of both Houses of the Tennessee Legislature; a member of this House, in which he proved himself during his repeated terms of reelection an able, upright, and eloquent statesman; urging high considerations of national policy, inculcating love and harmony between the North and South; denouncing then as now all usurpations of power by the General Government; defending that sacred doctrine of our Constitution, State rights, which now, through the folly of its violent friends, has been crushed to earth, but will rise again; jealously guarding the Treasury from plunderers; defending the rights of naturalized citizens; introducing in 1845 and, by determination and indomitable tenacity of purpose, carrying and marching with it through both Houses of Congress and over executive vetoes, the homestead law; then Governor of the State of Tennessee; then Senator of the United States, where he stood true when almost every southern Senator faltered and fell. Then appointed by President Lincoln military Governor of Tennessee, saving, by his firmness and bravery, the capital of that State by opposing its evacuation. Then nominated by the Republican party on a platform on which he still stands and which they have deserted, hurling curses like all deserters at those who remain true; himself and that platform, since abandoned by its framers, contributing largely to the success of the ticket which without them would not have been successful. Then President of the United States; a southern man true to the North; presiding over a northern Congress unforgiving to the South; himself the providential link around which the returning emotions of union and harmony will yet crystallize and cluster when the enmities of the present hour will be forgotten or remembered only to be deplored. Wise in forethought, brave in danger, forgiving in victory, posterity will award to him a high position among American Presidents, equal to any, if not superior to all save one.

The historian Rollin, in sketching the character of Cyrus, thus describes his beau ideal of a statesman and patriot:

"But an inward stock of goodness, compassion, and gentleness toward the unhappy; an air of moderation and reserve, even in prosperity and victory; an insinuating and persuasive behavior: the art of gaining people's hearts and attaching them to him more by affection than interest; a constant, unalterable care always to have right upon his side, and to imprint such a character of justice and equity upon all his conduct as his very enemies are forced to revere; and lastly, such a clemency as to distinguish those that offend through imprudence rather than malice, and to leave room for their repentance by giving them opportunity to return to their duty. These are qualities rarely found in the most celebrated conquerors of antiquity, but which shone forth most conspicuously in Cyrus."

Sir, I tell you and this House that Andrew Johnson does not deserve and can despise all these persecutions heaped upon him. The people of these United States, forgetting all his trivial faults and remembering his great virtues; the independent tiller of his own soil, secured to him as a homestead through the foresight of Andrew Johnson; the naturalized citizen, enjoying his rights largely through the opposition of Andrew Johnson to Nativism and Know-Nothingism; the northern people, remembering how he stood as a tower of strength against the inroads of secession and disunion, and the South remembering that he received the most violent abuse which any man ever received because he contended that there were rights and should be clemency for the fallen: these will win for him the gratitude of all true citizens of a restored and united country; while those who are persecuting him and seeking to secure and perpetuate disunion and strife through these measures falsely called reconstruction bills will be execrated by their posterity, who will efface their forefathers names from the tombstones of their burial-places, or apply to the Legislatures of their several States to change their names that they may get rid of the disgrace of being the descendants of their ancestors! I feel no hesitation in believing that Jefferson Davis will, with all his faults and crimes and follies, stand better with posterity than will any one who by vote or voice or deed, after the military necessity had passed, struck or attempted to strike one star from our glorious constellation of equal and sovereign States, or dimmed its luster within the Federal Union. The genius of American liberty around each State beneath

her banner draws the magic circle of the republican church, and on the head of him who dares to invade with hostile foot the sanctity of that circle she will launch the awful curse of her eternal hatred; and in the fire of that hatred and the withering power of that curse his memory will shrivel into nothingness or live only in the stench of its quenching.

But, sir, there is another suggestion I wish to make, inasmuch as I believe that all this legislation is instigated simply through a desire to influence the next presidential election. This truth is so patent that it is difficult to look serious when denying it. I urge, then, against further legislation of this kind that the next President is already chosen, and the gentlemen on the other side cannot help it. The people have already anticipated and rendered useless all caucuses and conventions and their concomitant corruption and log-rolling. The other side, though they are afraid to trust him, and are plotting to weaken him, cannot prevent his election. They dare not put up any of the recognized advocates of their principles. [Laughter.] They will be compelled to vote for him, and when elected they will try to use him for their own purposes. Need I say that in that they will fail, and failing in it, they will denounce him as they denounce Andrew Johnson, and as they had already begun to denounce President Lincoln. Had President Lincoln lived, the more conservative, the better half of the Republican party, who now seem afraid to break away from their bell-wethers, would have been with us in sustaining his policy of restoration, and the more radical portion of the party would have been howling to-day for his impeachment, as I venture to predict, and am willing to risk all the character of prescience in politics I might wish to get credit for that before our next President gets through with them—the first session of next Congress—they will be clamoring for his impeachment. I need not say that our next President, if he lives, will be Ulysses S. Grant.

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends," and that divinity has shown His Almighty hand throughout our history. Whether it was Washington or Lincoln or Johnson, just as we wanted him, the man fitted for the times appeared. And now, after having led our armies

with a power and energy never witnessed in any war before, and when there is danger of any mere politician playing the demagogue and pandering to the excited passions of the multitude, the man for the crisis, in whom all classes have confidence, who is above the arts of the demagogue, and has power with the people to dispense with the wire-pullers and act for the public good, steps into the place which needs him.

And now, sir, for the few minutes which remain to me let me say that the policy which I would adopt has been well and wisely stated by my illustrious constituent, Henry Ward Beecher. Mr. Beecher was at Peekskill, on his Mount Sinai, and there the Almighty revealed from Heaven to him the true doctrine of reconstruction, which he wrote in his Cleveland letter, and which should be engraved on tablets of stone.

Mr. WILSON, of Iowa. I rise to a point of order. I insist that the rule should be enforced, and that the gentleman should keep to the question. His remarks are certainly not relevant to the subject before the House.

Mr. ROBINSON. Does the gentleman from Iowa say that a message from Heaven is not in order in this House? [Laughter.]

The SPEAKER. The gentleman raises the question of order that the inscription of Mr. Beecher's letter upon tablets of stone is not in order.

Mr. ROBINSON. I shall then adopt his sentiments as my own, and hope they may then be in order. [Laughter.] Here are his words:

"Our theory of government has no place for a State except in the Union." \* \* \* "The Army becomes indispensable to local government and supersedes it. The Government at Washington is called to interfere in one and another difficulty." \* \* \*

"Our Government, wisely adapted to its own proper functions, is utterly devoid of those habits and unequipped with the instruments which fit a centralized government to exercise authority in remote States over local affairs." \* \* \*

"The Federal Government is unfit to exercise minor police and local government, and will inevitably blunder when it attempts it. To keep a half-score of States under Federal authority but without national ties and responsibilities; to oblige the central authority to govern half the territory of the Union by Federal civil officers and by the Army is a policy not only ungenial to our ideas and principles, but preëminently dangerous to the spirit of our Government." \* \* \*

"It is, in fact, a course of instruction preparing our Government to be despotic and familiarizing the people to a stretch of authority which can never be other than dangerous to liberty." \* \* \*

"I hear with wonder and shame and scorn the fear of a few that the South once more in adjustment with the Federal Government will rule this

nation." \* \* \* "Unless we turn the Government into a vast military machine there cannot be armies enough to protect the freedmen while southern society remains insurrectionary. If southern society is calmed, settled, and occupied and soothed with new hopes and prosperous industries, no armies will be needed; riots will subside." \* \* \*

"Whether we regard the whole nation or any section of it or class in it the first demand of our times is entire reunion." \* \* \*

"For the sake of the freedmen, for the sake of the South and its millions of our fellow-countrymen, for our own sake, and for the great cause of freedom and civilization, I urge the immediate reunion of all the parts which rebellion and war have shattered."

With this message Mr. Beecher came down to his people, as Moses descended, with words of wisdom from Heaven. But in his absence the Aarons of his congregation had set up a new god, a blatant calf. He found his pulpit in possession of Governor Brownlow and a godless crew, who were "swinging round the circle" after the President. Amid the cheers of his people he heard Brownlow, with the spirit of hell condensed into one sentence, and embracing the extreme radical creed of reconstruction, shouting: "First kill, then burn, then survey;" shoot and otherwise kill the men, cut the throats of the women, and dash out the brains of the infants sleeping in their cradles; and then, for fear men, women, or children might linger through the massacre or recover from the carnage, burn the houses over their heads that their gore and gashes might be licked with the tongue of flame or consumed with its breath; and then confiscate. Such were the terrible blasphemies which greeted his message from Heaven. I forgive him for dashing the tablets of stone to pieces. God never condescended to give him another copy!

Sir, did time permit, I should ask attention to words of wisdom from others who in the past and present have pleaded for mutual good will, forgiveness, and reconciliation: from George Washington, from Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Johnson, Horace Greeley, and others, who, "with malice towards none, with charity for all," would bind up the nation's wounds; and contrast them with those who in the Radical column, with Brownlow at their head, and "all hell following in the rear," are shouting "kill, burn, and survey, impeach, and confiscate, and when the South asks for restoration give them the penitentiary of hell."

Sir, we have been playing political thimble-ig

with the South, and who can tell under which thimble the little joker which will secure restoration is to be found? The lower the South has bent the knee the more intolerable have become the terms of pardon; even kindly words from any friend of the South were answered with greater indignity, till finally conditions are exacted which none but bullies would demand or cravens yield, for "the knee that is forced had been better unbent." But there is hope ahead. In after years, from a common bond of love, beneath a common flag, from a common brotherhood born of our northern children, mingling in holy family ties with the children of the South, men will look back and wonder that there was wickedness enough in the world to inflict such injuries upon one another; but will bless the peacemakers among their ancestors and curse the miscreants who fanned so long the flame of contention. Nay, I shall live to see that day; and shall not be ashamed to look my children in the face and to say that there was one who fought the rebels throughout the rebellion, but when the war was over pleaded for forgiveness, believed in southern honor, and voted as he believed; who never attempted "the future's portal with the past's blood-rusted key;" who would rather grasp the bloody hand of an open foe than touch the slimy finger of the coward that skulked from danger; who never kicked the undermost dog nor struck a fallen foe.

"When the foe has knocked under, to tread on him  
then—  
By the fist of my father, I blush for thee, Ben!"

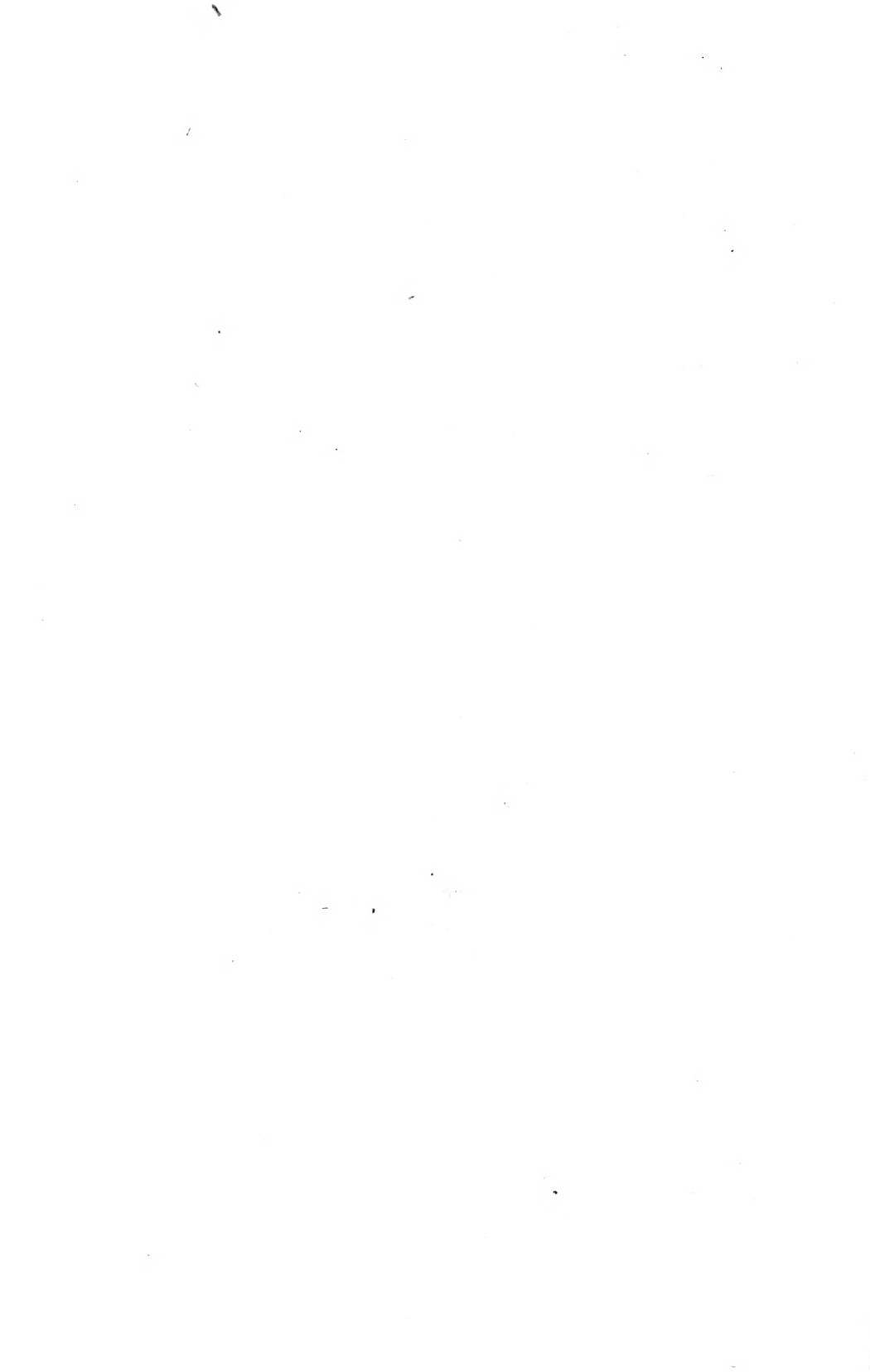
Let me say a closing word for my fellow-citizens of the South. I cannot forget that they, too, have sorrows that might well arouse revenge. There are vacant chairs around many

a lonely southern hearth. There are maddening memories which matched against our own and shrieked into each others ears would keep us for ever apart. They have hearts to feel and eyes to weep for loved ones lost, for husbands buried on distant battle-fields, fathers slaughtered in the mountain passes, and sons taken away by early death, all buried in nameless and unknown graves. They fought gallantly, but they are down, and cursed be the hand that smites the fallen. I long to see them back in the Union, that they and we, forgiving and forgetting the past, and girding up our loins for the magnificent future, may enter upon the career of greatness and glory which stretches away before us.

I have sought to elevate my own mind above the vengeance of a divided present, and have looked to the brightening flag of a united future as the inheritance of glory for a common posterity. In days gone by I learned my creed from Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, John M. Clayton and John J. Crittenden. I stand by the record and refuse the teaching of Brownlow and Phillips.

I see in the future an ocean-bound Republic; in the immediate future a hundred millions of her united people. Where but a few stars flickered in her sky I see constellations blazing; the flutter of her flag is reflected on every sea, the plash of her propeller vexes every ocean; and to that future I summon back our brethren of the South, for without them success would be a failure, and our glory would be but shame.

"Oh would thou wert near me, my southern brother,  
I love thee as dear as the son of my mother;  
I am lonely and sad since the day that we parted,  
My lips have the tone of a maid broken-hearted;  
But come, from the future fresh flowers we'll gather,  
And sing the sweet songs of our Union forever."





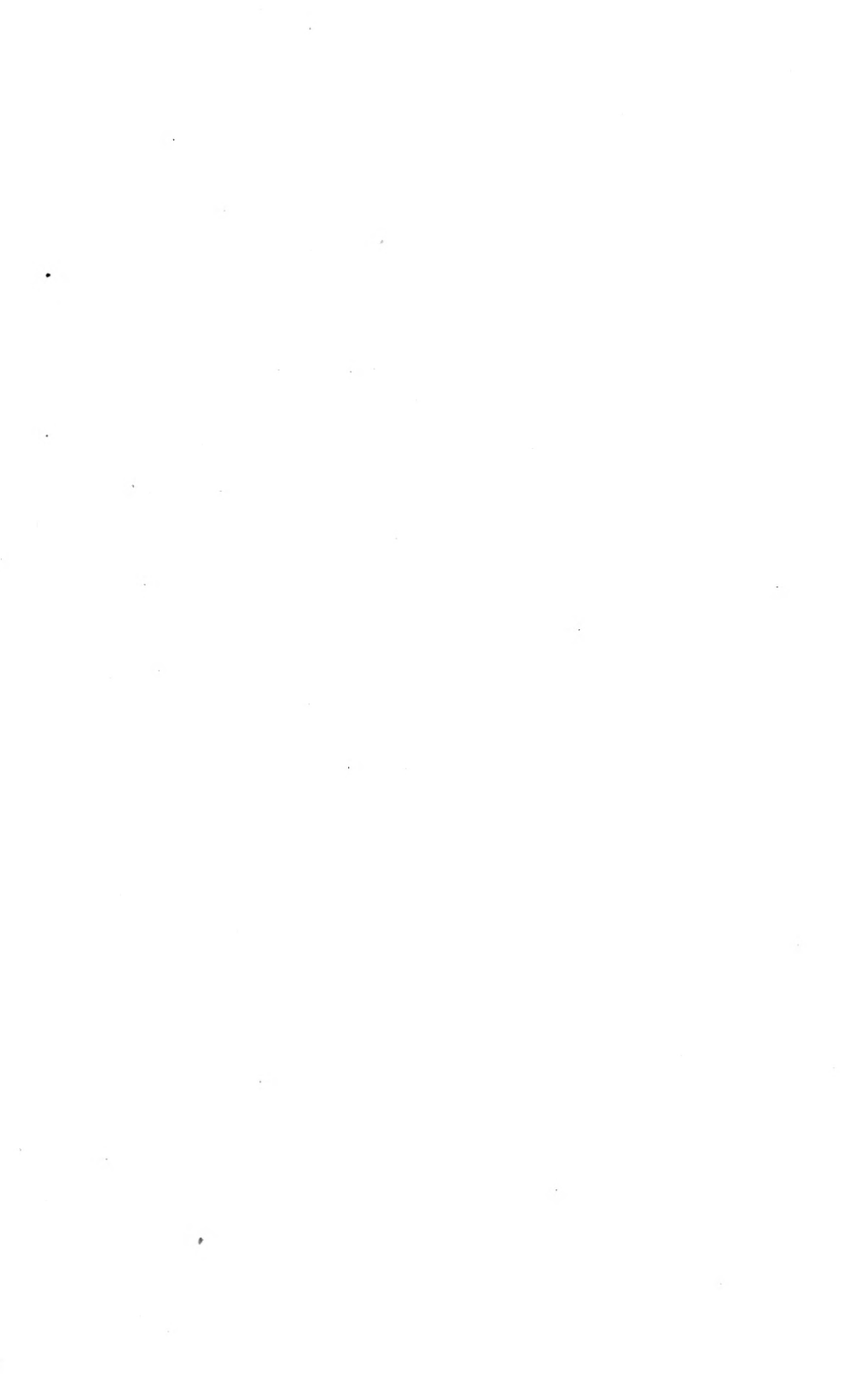




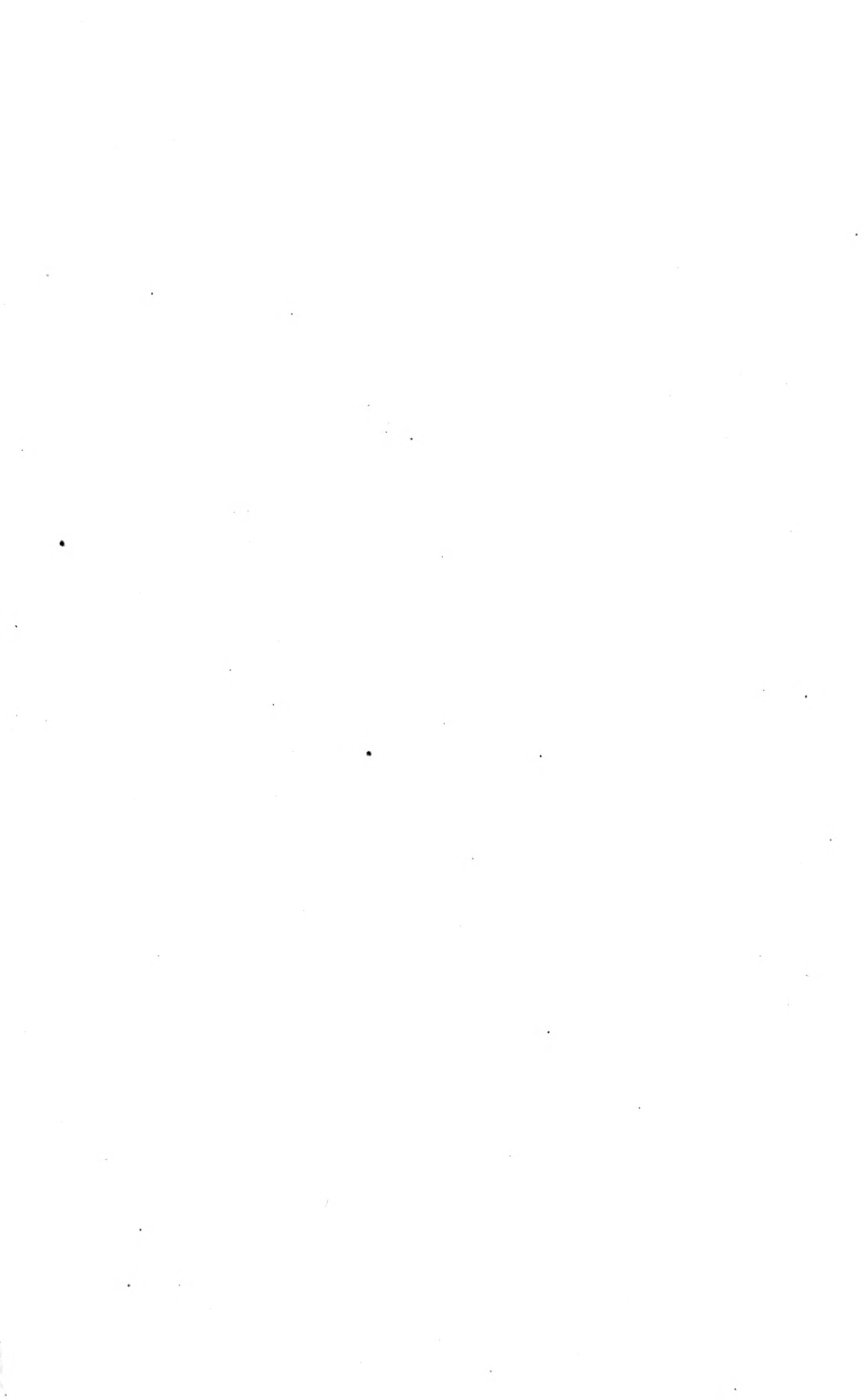


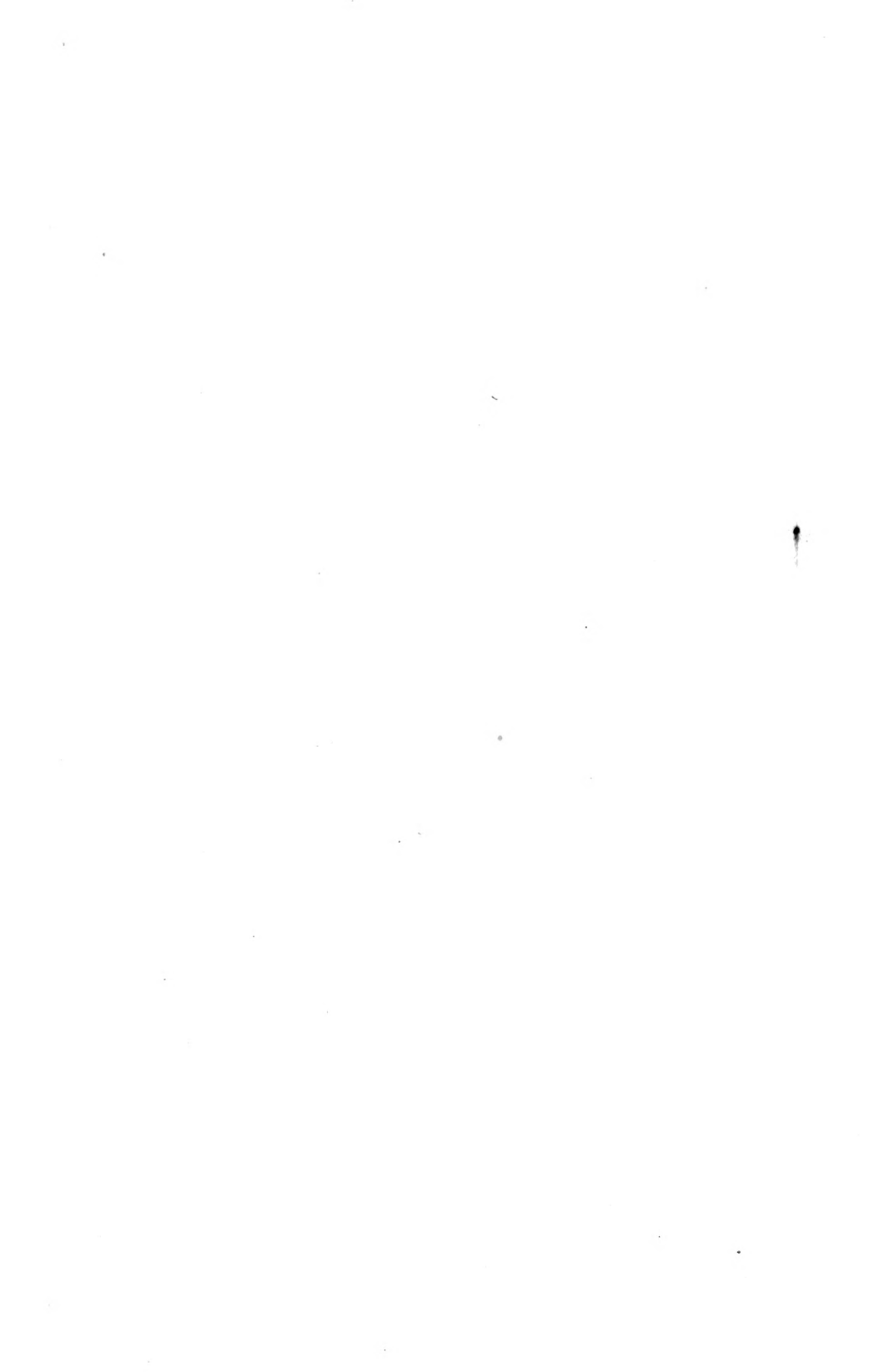


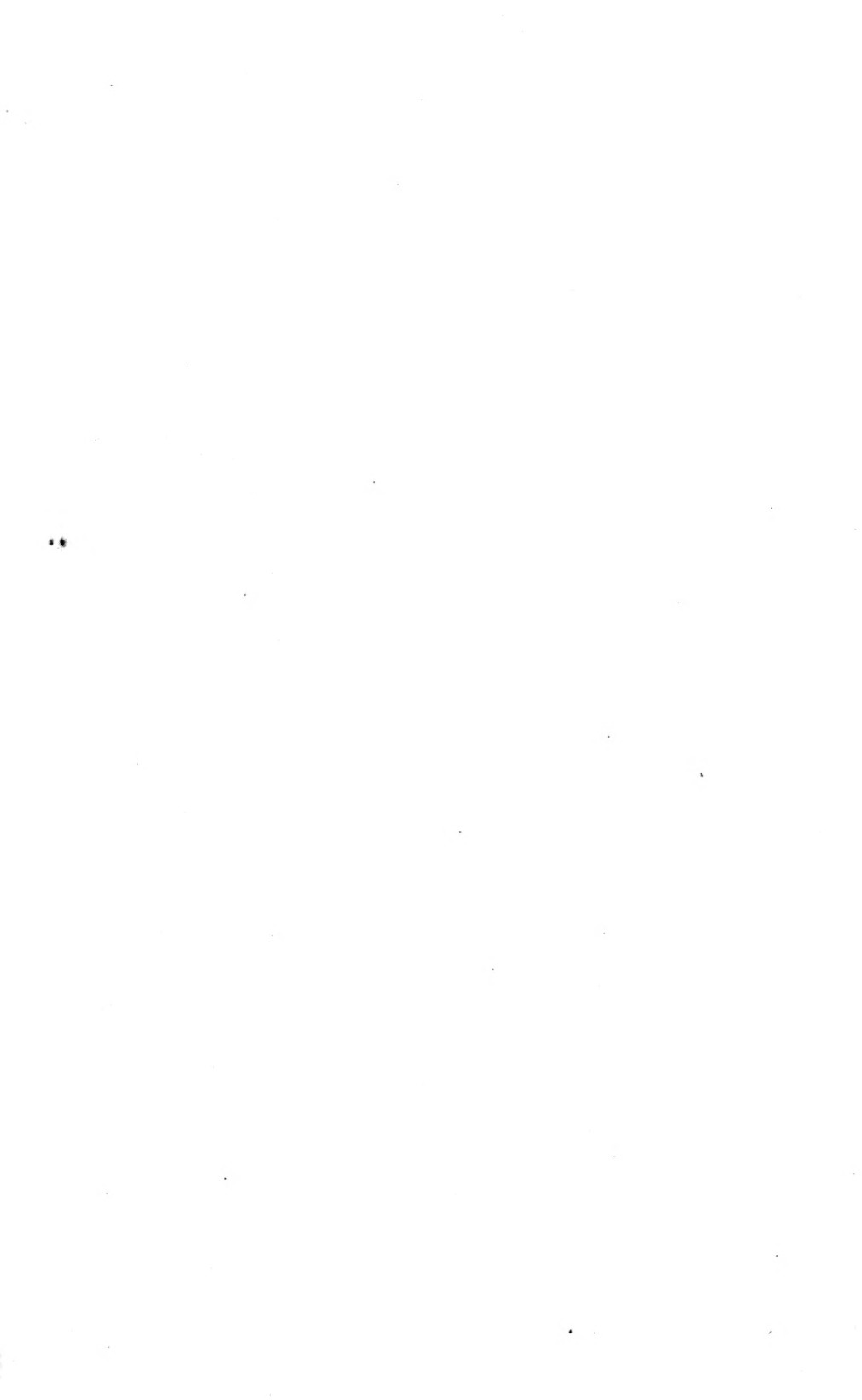




















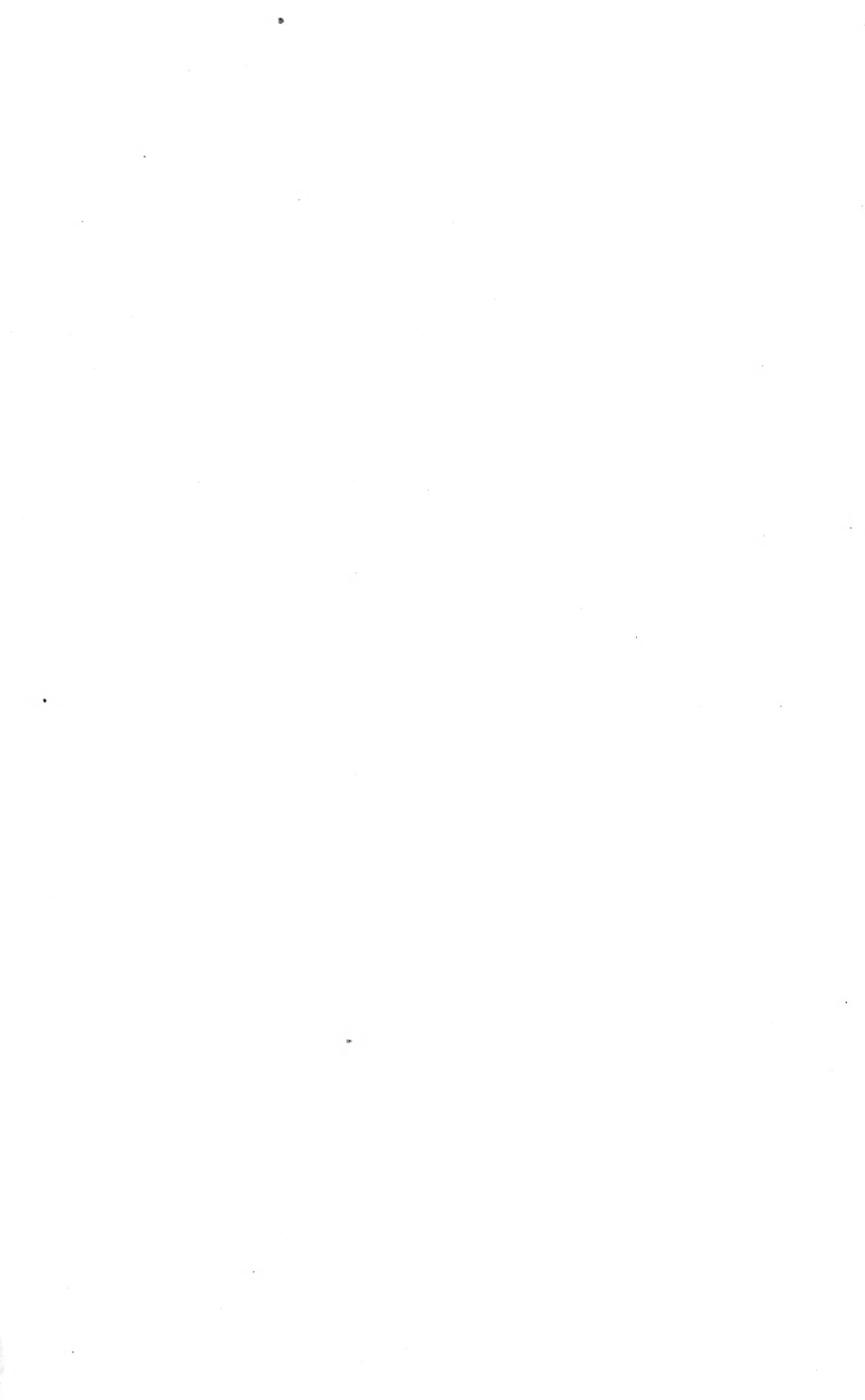


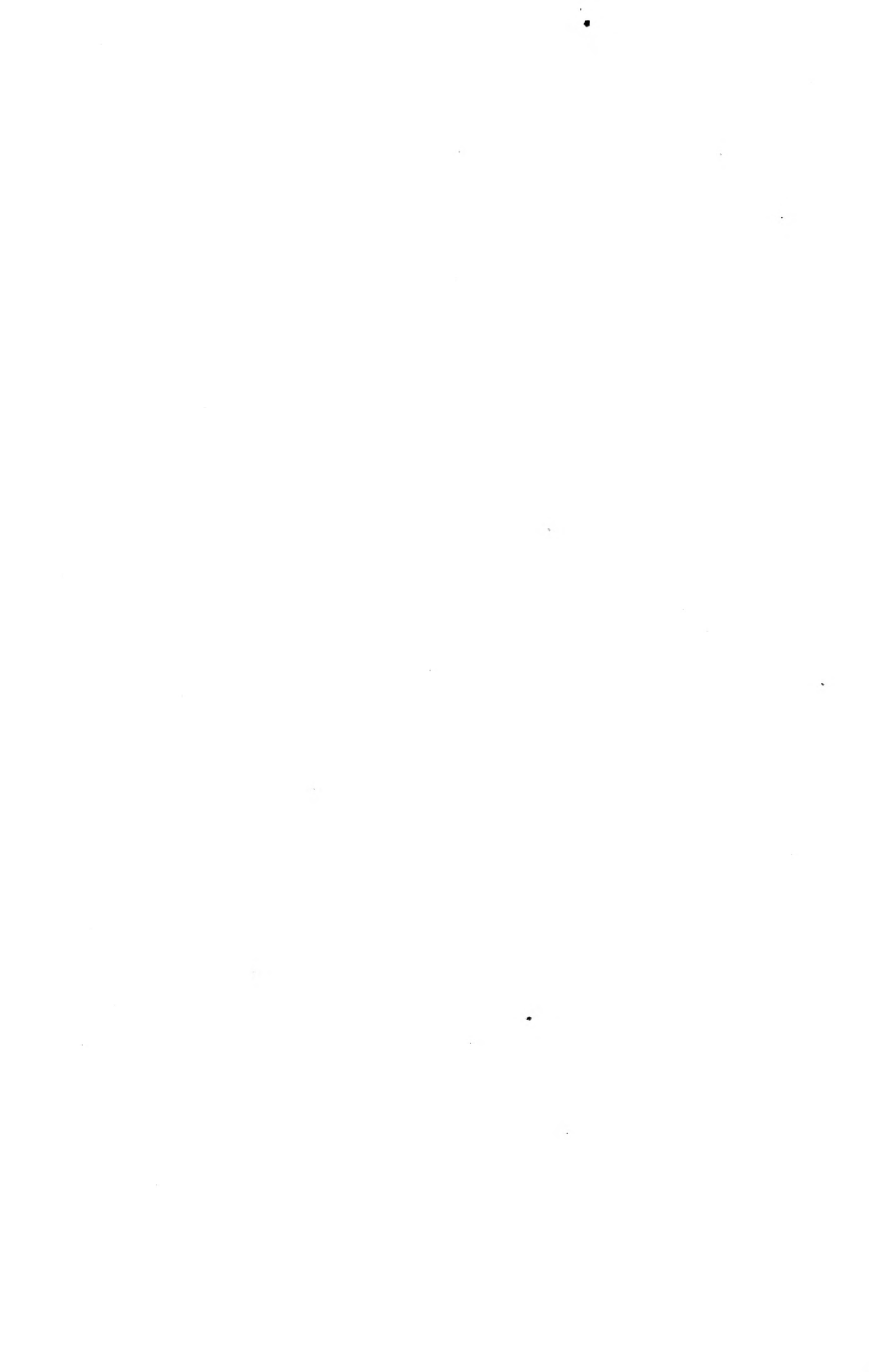


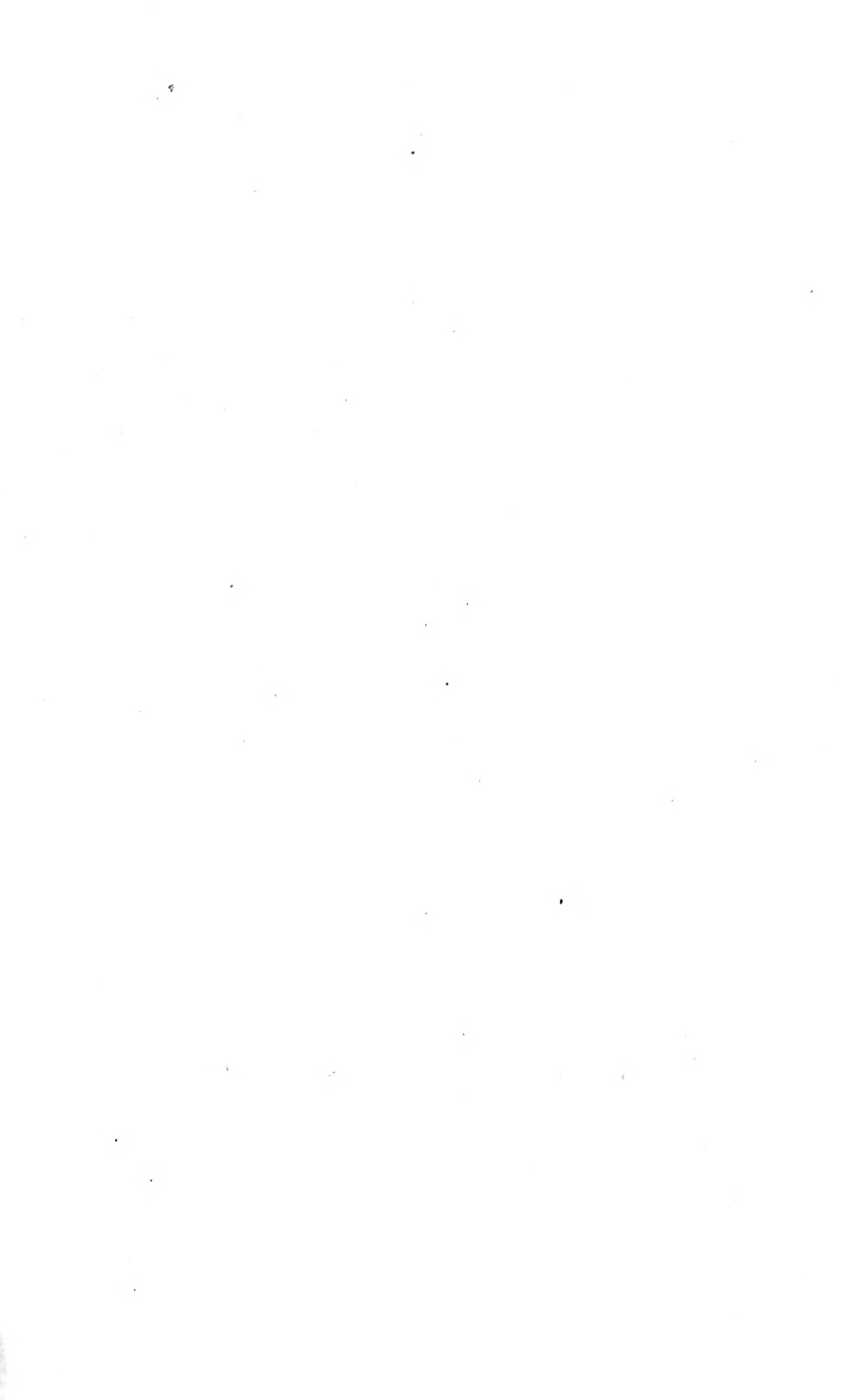




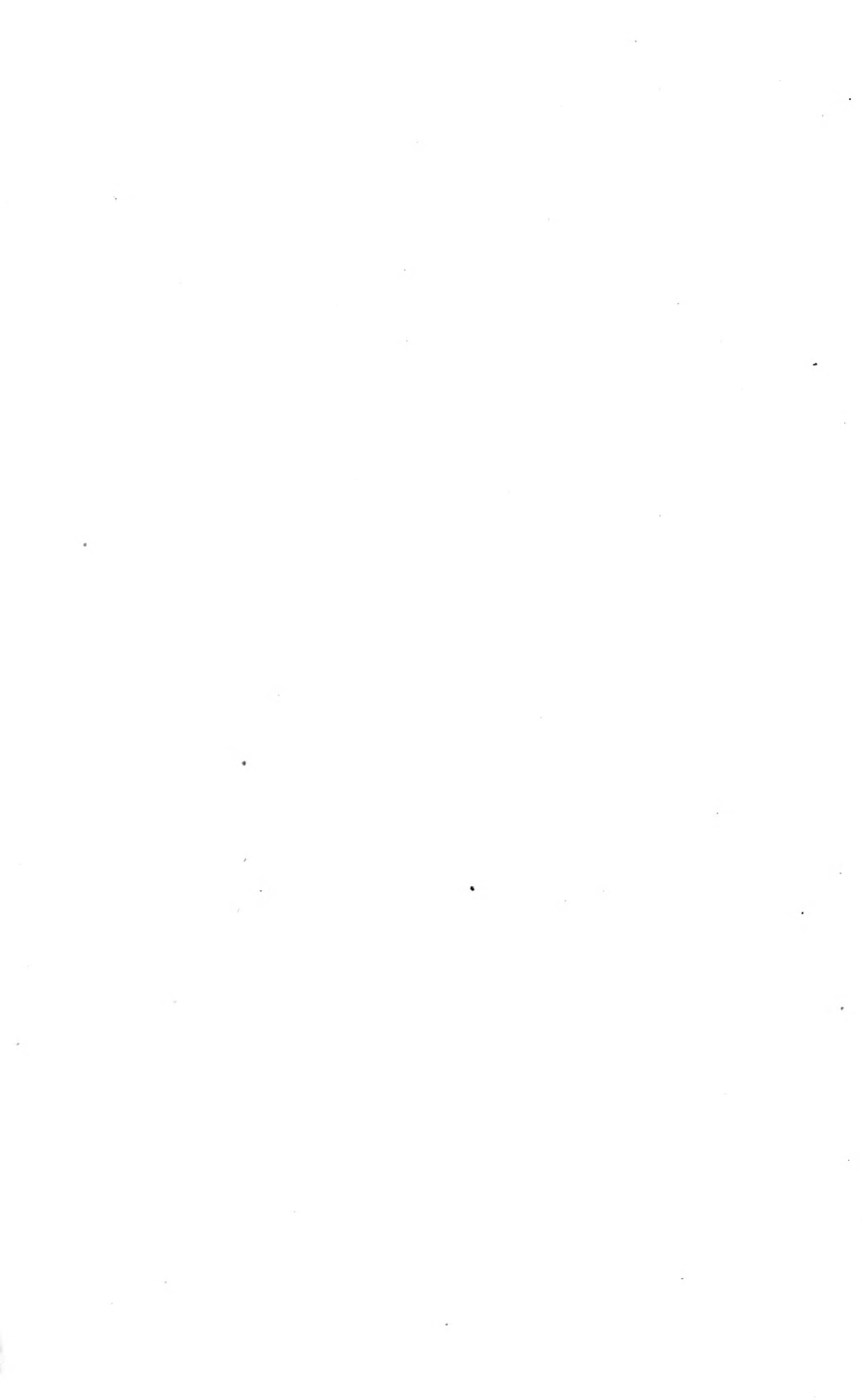


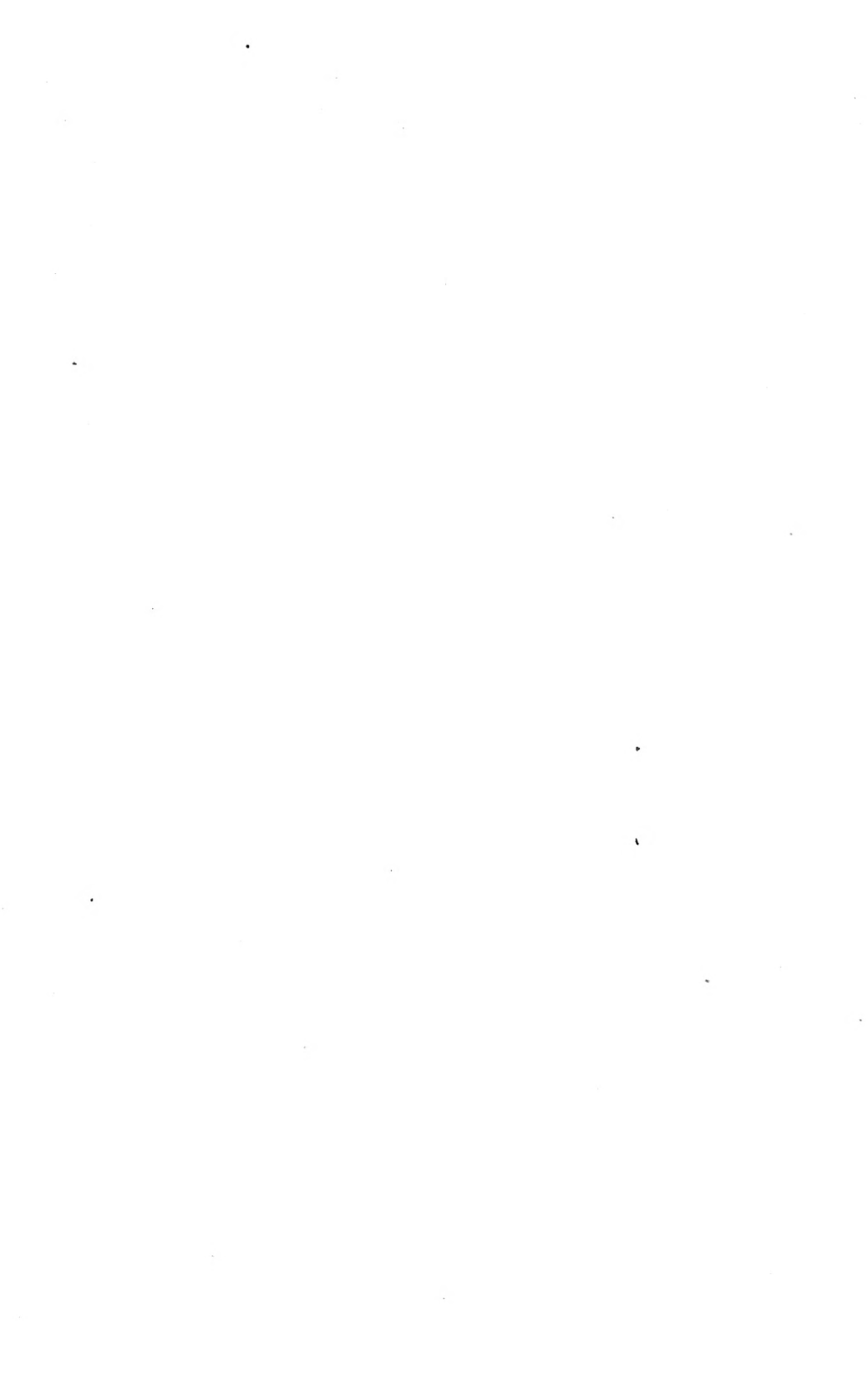




















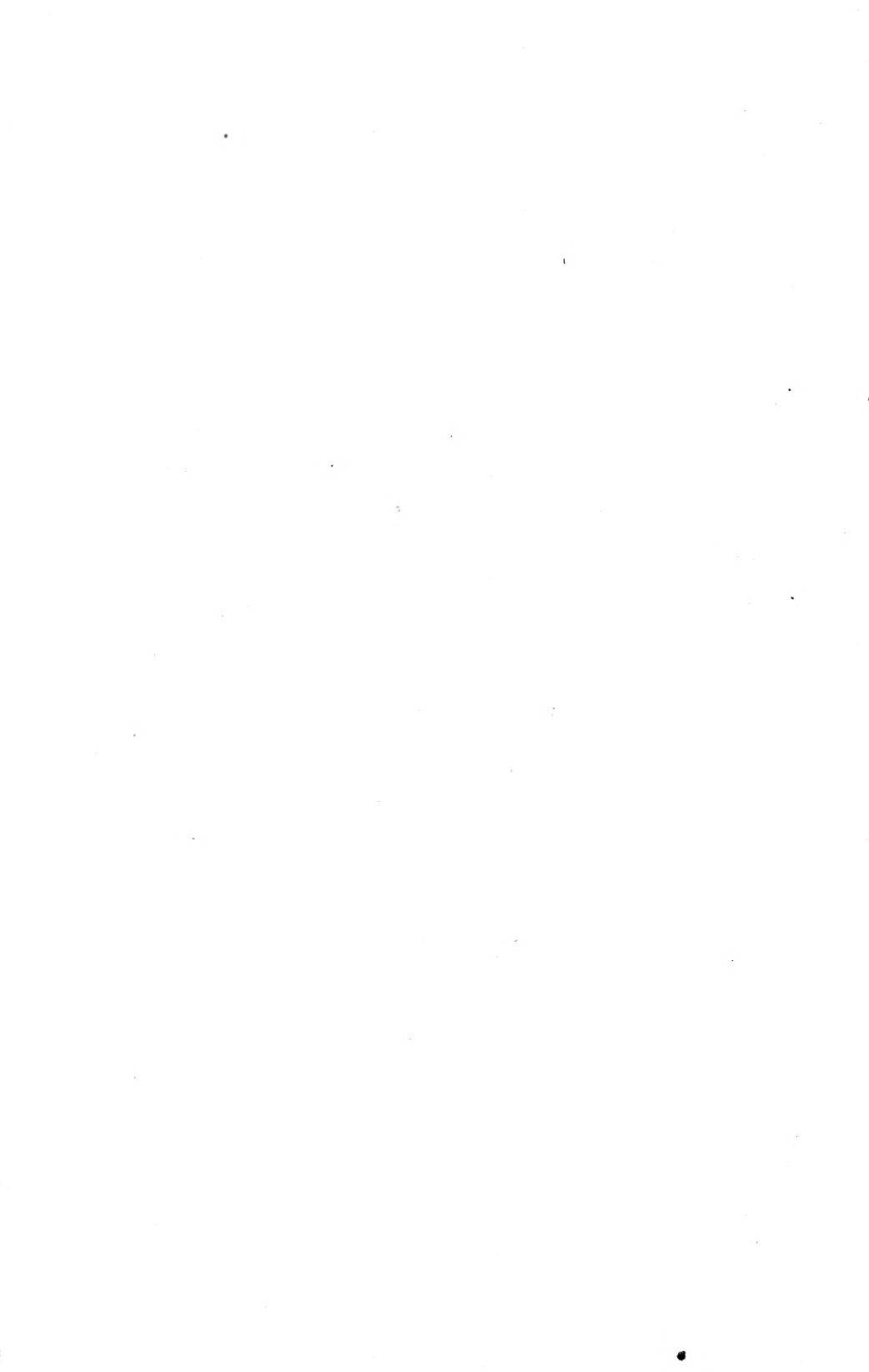


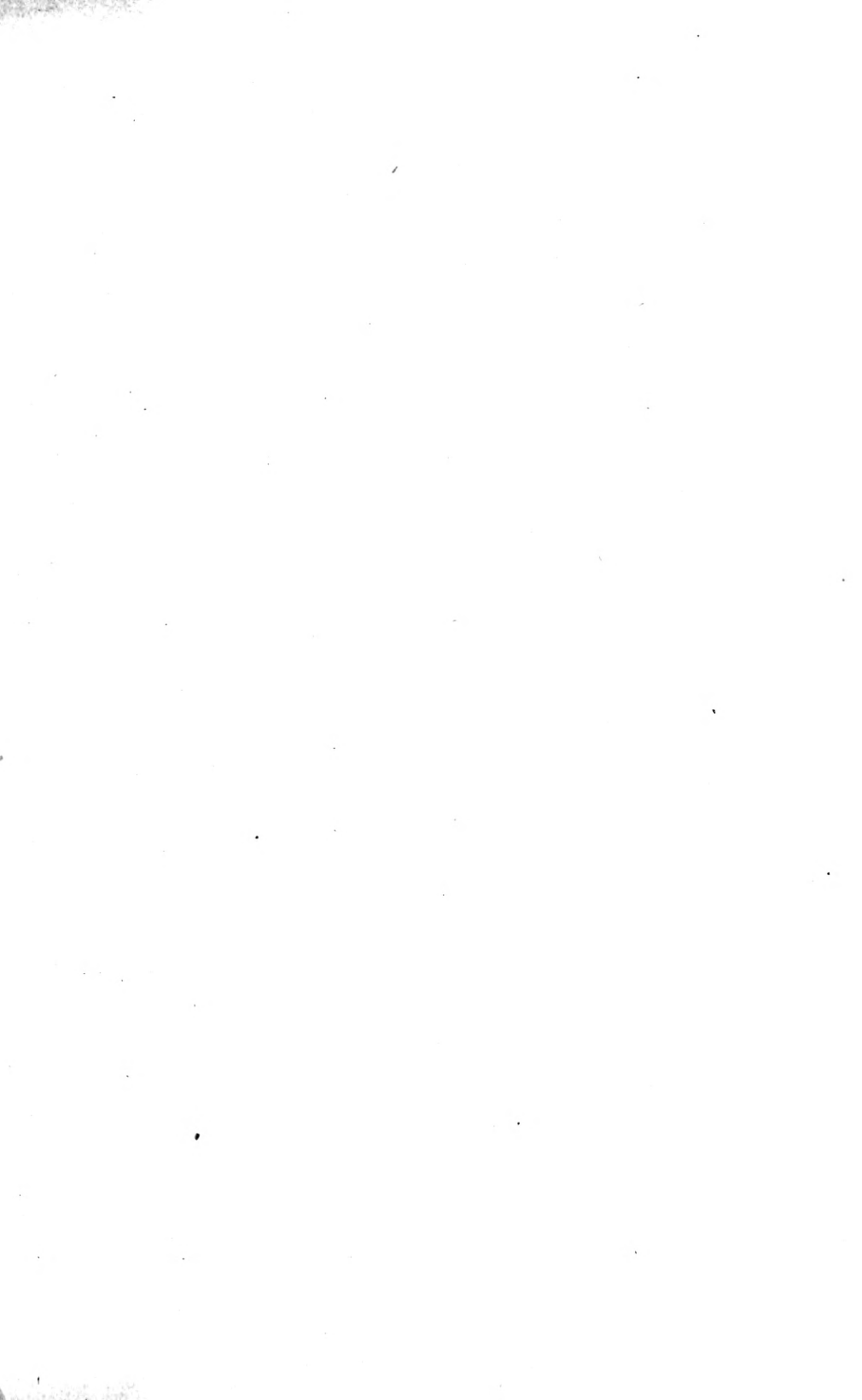




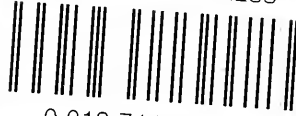








LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 013 744 728 9